1: Radcliffe-Brown E-5 (1906-1908)1922
AZ2 Andamans AZ2

824 784 the species were cut there would be a storm. The bark of the aerial roots of the tree affords a fibre used in the Little Andaman for bow-strings, but only used in the Great Andaman for making personal ornaments. It is possible that some magical properties are attributed to the ornaments made from this fibre.

The *Pterocarpus dalbergioides* is one of the most striking trees of the Andamans. It has a very hard red wood, from which the natives make their sounding-boards. There is an obscure belief in the *A-Pučikwar* tribe (and possibly also in other tribes) that it is dangerous to look at the tree when it is in flower. I was twice told a story of how some people were affected by looking at the flowers, and either went mad or died. On one occasion my interpreter translated the words of my informant by saying "They saw the flowers, and went giddy, and they all went to hell (*jereg-l'ar-mugu*)." Men must be careful when the tree is in flower, not to look at it too long. In the North Andaman I was told that string games (*jipre*) must not be played when the *Pterocarpus* tree is in flower. They may be indulged in with safety at any other time of the year. (String games, according to one statement, were invented by the *Lau*, while another account attributes the invention to the crab.)

824 751 The *Tetranthera lancæfolia* is a small tree from which the natives obtain the wood for the shafts of their pig arrows. The leaves of this tree are believed to have the power to keep away the spirits of the forest. They are used in the pig-eating ceremony described in the last chapter. The wood is shredded and made into plumes, and these plumes are believed to have magical properties. They are worn by a man who has killed another, and are believed to protect him from the vengeance of the spirit of the dead man.

824 278 757 A common remedy for sickness of different kinds is a small tree called *gugma* in *Aka-Bea*, which Mr Man identifies as being *Trigonostemon longifolius*. The leaves of this tree are made into a bed for the patient to lie upon. They are also crushed and rubbed over the patient's body, or he is made to inhale the odour of the crushed leaves. The natives say that it is the "smell" of the plant that possesses medical properties. The

1: Radcliffe-Brown E-5 (1906-1908)1922
AZ2 Andamans AZ2

"smell" will drive away turtle, and leaves should therefore not be taken in a canoe. A man who has been handling the leaves would not go turtle-hunting.

Another remedy is a species of *Alpinia*. The leaves and stems of this plant are chewed and the juice swallowed for certain ailments. The plant is also used when taking honey. A man takes some of the leaves in his mouth and chews them well. Before taking the honeycomb he sprays the saliva from his mouth over and around it. He may also rub the chewed leaves over his body. The natives say that in this way they are able to prevent the bees from stinging them.

Magical properties are attributed to a number of plants that have not been botanically identified. Thus the leaves of a small tree called *tare* in *Aka-Jeru* are crushed and moistened with water and rubbed over the body as a remedy for illness. A strip of bark from the same tree is tied round the chest of a man with a pain in his chest. The bark of two trees called (in *Aka-Jeru*) *tip* and *laro* is crushed and moistened and rubbed over a sick man's body. The leaves of a plant called *pare* are crushed with water and the infusion is drunk by persons suffering from diarrhœa and abdominal pains. A creeper called *korotli* is crushed and tied round a limb in cases of snake-bite. The seeds of the *Entada scandens* are heated in the fire and applied (while hot) to such wounds as that from the tusk of a boar.

There are a certain number of trees and plants about which the natives say that any person cutting them will become blind. The names of four of these in *Aka-Jeru* are *jin*, *burut*, *dey*, and *mit*.

We may turn now to animals and animal substances. Magical properties are attributed to bees'-wax, particularly to black bees'-wax. In a case of pleurisy black bees'-wax was heated until it was soft, and then smeared over the man's chest. Bees'-wax is believed to keep away the spirits of the forest.

If a man be bitten by a snake and the snake be killed it is skinned and the inner surface of the skin is applied to the wound.

2:Man G-5 (1869-1880)1932 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

142 Dr. Dobson, in noticing a marked case of this kind, drew attention to the fact of its differing from steatopyga, thereby distinguishing them in this respect from Hottentots.

2. Albinism and polydactylism are unknown, and only one case of erythrism, and that of a faint type, has been observed, or is known to the natives of our acquaintance.[1]

3. No instance appears of obliquity of vision, of cleft palate, absence of teeth, or of supernumerary teeth, and only one of prognathism[2] and hare-lip respectively. Cases of "Darwin's point" in the ear are constantly met with.

158 **Pathology.**—1. No idiots, maniacs, or lunatics have ever yet been observed among them, and this is not because those so [57] afflicted are killed or confined by their fellows, for the greatest 732 care and attention are invariably paid to the sick, aged, and helpless. Two or three cases of hunchback and lateral curvature of the spine have come under notice, but instances of the kind are evidently very rare.

164 2. It has often been observed, that though the Andamanese waste away very rapidly in sickness, they regain flesh with equal facility when convalescent; but, nevertheless, they possess so little vital power, that they readily succumb to diseases against which others usually struggle successfully;[3] indeed, they appear to suffer as much, if not more, than individuals of alien races from the febrile disorders—mainly attributable to malaria, so prevalent throughout these islands—which frequently lay the foundation of chest complaints, from which they rarely recover.

3. Pulmonary consumption and other forms of pectoral disease are among the chief causes of mortality among these tribes.[4] These disorders do not appear to be confined to, or to be more prevalent in, certain districts, but there is little doubt that they have been most frequent amongst those living in the homes provided for their benefit in and near our settlements in South Andaman.[5]

[1] In no other particular does this case appear to differ from the rest.

[2] As Professor Owen, F.R.S., truly remarks, "their prognathism is not more than is found in most of the Southern Asiatic peoples, and, indeed, in the lower orders of men in all countries, and may be due or relate to the prolonged sucking of the plastic infant." (*Vide* "Brit. Asso. Reports," 1861.)

[3] This not only refers to maladies introduced by the alien population, such as measles, venereal diseases, &c., but to those complaints from which they suffered prior to the establishment of the settlement.

[4] In reference to complaints of this nature, it may interest some to know that Dr. De Jongh's cod liver oil was largely used in the homes, and with considerable benefit to the patients, several recoveries having resulted therefrom. From inquiry it would seem that cases of constipation are comparatively rare, and that diarrhœa is almost the habitual state of their excretory functions.

[5] As this circumstance was traced to the system of giving them clothes to be worn at our various stations, and when visited by Europeans, it was deemed advisable to modify the regulation and to supply them only with drawers, leaving the upper part of the body exposed. A marked improvement in the general health resulted from this change.

2:Man G-5 (1869-1880)1932 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

164 **Medicine.**—1. The diseases most common among these tribes are:—

1st, malarial fever (*did·dirya-*).
2nd, catarrh (*ngī·rib-*).
3rd, coughs (*ō·dag-*).
4th, rheumatism (*mŏl-*).
5th, phthisis.
6th, pneumonia.
7th, heart disease.[1]

757 278 2. In febrile complaints the treatment adopted by those living in the interior, and less frequently by the coast dwellers,[2] is the following:—A bed is made for the patient of the leaves of the *Trigonostemon longifolius* (*gū·gma-*), and his body is rubbed with these leaves, which are sometimes first boiled, while he sniffs at some crushed pieces of the same; after a time *chū·lugâ-*[3] is given him to drink, and then with some of their patent ointment, *kòi·ob-*,[4] which is not used internally, as has been supposed,[5] the upper lip is painted and also the neck, if the invalid be married. When the fever is accompanied by pains in the chest or head, a *chàu·ga-tâ-*[6] is tied tightly round the part affected, as this is [755] believed to act as a charm, internal pains being always ascribed to the malign influence of evil spirits. During the course of the fever, the patient is constantly rubbed with *gū·gma-* leaves by one or more friends, who insist also upon his swallowing large quantities of *chū·luga-*; scarifying is never practised at such times. As only a small proportion of cases of this kind have a fatal result, great faith is placed in the treatment above described, and, at all events, it is certain that no injurious effects are caused by it.

757 3. The first half of the rainy season is usually the most sickly time with them, as with ourselves, in regard to fever and bowel

among the women of suckling each other's infants; in fact many parents have thus become tainted with the disease, the characteristics of which have in almost every case been most strongly marked, presenting an interesting study to the medical officers who have had charge of the patients. Great benefit was derived from the treatment and remedies (mercury and iodide of potassium) usually employed in Europe, but time alone will show how far our efforts will avail to prevent the disease from infecting the entire population, if, indeed, it do not, as in certain parts of Australia, lead to the early extermination of the race.

[753] Because of the insidious nature, and (to them) mysterious origin, of the last three named diseases, they say that either *ĕ·rem-chàu·gala* has shot the sufferer, or *jūru-win-* has speared him: regarding these evil spirits further reference will be found at "Death and Burial," paragraph 25, and "Religious Beliefs and Demonology," paragraphs 12 and 14.

[1] The reason for this will be found under "Tribal Communities," paragraph 5.
[2] *Vide* Appendix B, No. 63.
[3] *Vide* Appendix B, No. 60.
[4] *Vide* Mouat, p. 306.
[5] *Vide* Appendix B, No. 44.

2: Man G-5 (1869-1880)1932 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

affections. Those natives who have been long with us, have great faith in our medicines, especially in the efficacy of quinine for curing fever, from which, as exposure is very trying to their constitutions, they suffer greatly when living in the clearings we have made at Port Blair.

4. For a cold in the head they merely remain at home and nurse themselves, crouching over the fire; for a cough, sea-water is often drunk, or they will chew the thick portion of the long leaves of a plant called *jī·ni-* (of the *Alpinia* species), and when the bitter juice has been extracted and swallowed, tie the chewed fibre round the neck; if benefit be not derived from this, they then take a piece of the upper portion of the stem of the *Calamosagus laciniosus*, called *pôr-*, and, removing the bark, chew the rest, and swallow the sap. Many cures having been attributed to the wonderful properties of the two descriptions of *chū·lnga-*, one or two quarts daily are prescribed to the unhappy patient, until the cough leaves him.

5. In cases of rheumatism and paralysis, a *chàu·ga-tâ-* is tied round the parts affected, and *chū·lnga-*, moist as found, is rubbed into them: if no relief is experienced within a day or so, warm water is poured over the suffering members, which are then shampooed; should no improvement result, even after these measures, recourse is had to scarification; this is done with a quartz or glass flake, by a woman, generally the wife or one near of kin to the sufferer. It has been noticed that but few of those who have been attacked by rheumatism in the jungle ever regain the full use of their limbs.

6. In phthisis, or when any internal organ is diseased, steps are taken by the friends of the patient to defeat the machinations of the evil one, to whom the victim's sufferings are attributed; to this end, one or more *chàu·ga-tâ-* are first fastened tightly over the seat of pain, a lump of black beeswax, *tō·bul-pid-*,[1] is then held over a fire till it begins to melt, when it is instantly applied, being passed rapidly over the flesh; the wax which adheres is not removed, but wears off in a few days. The patient is also subjected to pressure with the hands by a relative or friend of the same sex, while an attendant frequently sucks the skin. Scarification is the *dernier ressort* when the bad symptoms increase.[2]

7. Every attention is paid to the wants and wishes of the sick, and the friends do all in their power to effect recovery, but no charms, excepting the *chàu·ga-tâ-*, are employed in the hope of

[1] *Vide* Appendix B, No. 57.

[2] As many bad cases of lung disease among those in the homes have been successfully treated with cod liver oil, they have now great faith in that medicine.

2:Man G-5 (1869-1880)1932 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

averting or curing illness; after recovery, no ceremonies of purification take place.

8. With respect to these necklaces of human bones, it should be stated that it is not considered necessary that the bones used for this purpose should have belonged to an adult, those of a child or of one long since dead, are considered equally efficacious; the belief is that they cure diseases, and shield the wearer in some measure from the machinations of evil spirits, through the intervention of the disembodied spirit, who is supposed to be gratified by, and aware of, the respect thus paid to his memory. Loose teeth obtained from human skulls and jaw bones, are sometimes strung together as necklaces, or, if too few for such a purpose, they are included among the pieces of bone which are broken up to form the *chàu·ga-tâ-*; turtle bones are also sometimes added under similar circumstances.

9. The skull and jawbone are carried, either separately or together, merely as mementoes, and are not accredited with any peculiar virtues.

10. During pregnancy, the women eat in moderation, but delight in as great a variety of food as possible, telling their husbands day by day what to procure for them;[1] they are also in the habit of taking as much active exercise as possible, as they believe it conduces to an easy *accouchement*, and the same reason is given for the custom, common among them, of consuming small quantities of *tâ·la-ōg-*[2] from time to time; but this practice may be traced with more probability to the fact that the appetite of persons in an anæmic condition is generally fanciful and depraved, such substances as "lime, chalk, or slate pencil being sometimes greedily devoured by them."

11. When about to be confined, the custom is for the husband, and some of the woman's female friends, to attend on her; she is placed in a sitting posture, the left leg is stretched out, and the right knee brought up, so as to enable her to clasp it with her arms. Her husband supports her back and presses her as desired, while her female friends hold a leaf screen *(kâ·pa-jâ·tnga-* over the lower part of her person, and assist her, to the best of their ability, in the delivery and in the removal of the after-birth; the umbilical cord is severed by means of a *Cyrena* shell (now a steel blade is often used), and when the infant has been washed in cold water, its skin is gently scraped with the shell. Publicity is not courted on these occasions, as has been asserted,[3] but all, save those whose services are required, continue their occupations as usual. Soon after the delivery, some warm

[1] Further allusion to this subject will be made under "Tabu."
[2] *Vide* Appendix E, No. 58.
[3] *Vide* Mouat, p. 294.

2: Man G-5 (1869-1880)1932 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

Soon after delivery, soma warm
water is given to the woman to drink; she is also fed with 846
meat-gravy, and the water in which shell or other fish have been boiled; after a time, should she desire it, fish, shell-fish, yams, or fruit are given her, but no meat.[1] During the first two or three days, she remains in a sitting posture, propped up by articles arranged so as to form a couch. As might be supposed, from the active habits and unsophisticated manners of these people, their women rarely suffer much during labour and child-birth; in fact, no instances of difficult delivery are known.[2]

12. For ear-ache, head-ache, and tooth-ache, recourse is had, in 755
the first instance, to the *chàwga-tâ-*, then to scarification, should the pain continue and cause swelling.

13. In cases of skin disease, they afford relief, at least from 757
irritation, by applying to the parts affected a large smooth stone previously warmed over a fire.

14. When a wound is inflicted by a thorn, stone, shell, &c., 752
hot water is poured over it from a *Cyrena* shell, which is then 278
heated and applied to the part as hot as it can be borne; or, if the injury be slight, sea-bathing is prescribed, as it is said to expedite the healing process. In treating a boil, they scarify all round the swelling in order to reduce the inflammation, and afterwards bathe it with *chŭ·lnga-* "lotion." This substance is also taken internally when suffering from dysentery, while for diarrhœa they swallow small quantities of a whitish clay, called *kôtrē·o-*.

15. The *larvæ* of bees found attached to honeycombs is eaten 757
to correct constipation, or, if in season, the fruits of two trees, 278
ô·ropa- and *chôb-*, which are much relished, and not without reason.

16. Their method of treating a case of epilepsy is to sprinkle 757
the patient with cold water, and then to scarify his brow.

17. When bitten by a snake (especially a venomous one), if 752
they succeed in killing it, they cut it open, and apply the kidney fat to the wound, rubbing it in for some time; should they fail in capturing the reptile, a ligament is tied above the bite, and the surrounding flesh is scarified. Deaths from snake bites, though not unknown, are rare. The late chief of the Middle Strait community died in a few hours from the bite of a certain tree snake called *tâ·ya-jō·bo-*,[3] in September, 1878, and another

[1] During menstruation they abstain from pork, *Paradoxurus*, turtle, honey, and yams, and live upon certain varieties of fish, sour fruits, iguanas, and prawns.

[2] The custom known by the name of *couvade*, or the paternal lying-in, is quite unknown among the Andamanese.

[3] This snake is said to be the most deadly, after which the *là·raba-* and *wà·ra-jō·bo-* are the most dreaded. The last appears to be the *Ophiophagus elaps*. Further allusion to the *là·raba-* and the *wà·ra-jō·bo-* will be made under "Superstitions."

6: Cipriani E-5 (1951-1953)1961 AZ2 Andamans AZ2
Onge

LIDIO CIPRIANI, Hygiene and Medical Practices among the Onge (Little Andaman)

Plate 2

142
291
301
302
767
765

142
301
302
291
765

a) and c) Women and girls wearing *ibidanghī*.
b) Bandages of ficus bark against fever.
d) Wife and husband in their usual attire.

[p. 488(B)]

6: Cipriani E-5 (1951-1953)1961 AZ2 Andamans AZ2
Onge

documented the fact in a number of photographs. The purpose, however, is purely hygienic . an unpainted body is, in their opinion, exposed to certain illness. They explained this belief to me by saying that without paint the body becomes "hot". The men who travelled with me far from women were anxious every day to spread clay on face, chest and limbs, just to avoid "heat" or, in other words, fever. I thought of malaria, but they do not suffer from it. Of this I will speak later on.

Rough clay is applied daily, on infant bodies as well as on adults, for health purposes. It is used to cure all kinds of sickness, together with ochre, turtle fat and honey. Honey spread on wounds appears to hasten healing. Identical curative methods are employed in Oceania. They probably existed among the Tasmanians, and are still used in Australia by the aborigines. I found nothing of the kind in Africa, where honey is plentiful. The Onge consider clay, ochre, honey and turtle fat good for external and internal treatment alike – both preventive and curative. Powdered bees' wax of a dark colour is often added. I saw mothers give their children, as a laxative, a number of pills made of similar ingredients. No bigger than common hazelnuts, the pills are red and greasy. In Onge forests I saw some small excavations, a few feet deep, made to extract the medicinal clay from special ground pockets. In its natural form the clay is light coloured, powdery and free of stones. When it is burnt the colour changes, assuming red, yellow, whitish or black shades according to the different qualities used, all believed to possess healing properties and to ensure hygienic colouring of the body. Mixed as described above, clay is used by the Onge in every circumstance from fever to snake or scorpion bite, constipation, breast infection in women, or post-delivery bleeding.

Belief in the medicinal properties of clay is as old as humanity itself. Even among contemporary European peoples, notwithstanding severe criticism, clay is still honoured as health-giving, not, I must say, on wholly foolish grounds. The Onge, who smear their bodies constantly with clay, have the softest, most velvety skin that I ever saw anywhere in the world. Wounds spread with clay mixed with honey and fat leave negligible scars. The laxative and germ-killing action of clay is admitted by physicians in many countries, including Europe. It never causes infection. Geophagism has ancient origins, and we find it practiced by many modern populations. Children of every race and all young wild animals lick clay instinctively to absorb the mineral salts required by a developing organism. The Onge habit of using clay for healing purposes can be set, therefore, in a very wide frame.

Mental and nervous disorders are rare in Little Andaman. Few natives are subject to epilepsy – an important matter for the Onge : they consider such people as possessed by spirits who speak through their mouths, and respectfully question them as oracles. Several Onge chiefs, such as Chief Tchôtâ of Tambĕ-ĕ-buiĕ, are apt to go into trances that have all the appearance of epileptic fits. They were elected chiefs on the strength of their epilepsy!

Constant exercise keeps eyesight and hearing extremely sharp in the Onge. I saw no single case of myopia or presbyopia among the natives, nor

6: Cipriani E-5 (1951-1953)1961 AZ2 Andamans AZ2
Onge

them ; neither children nor adults have dilated spleens. Inhabitants of other regions where malaria incidence is high often show the same immunity, supposedly attained through local adaptation. Papuasians, Melanesians and Africans sometimes appear insensitive to malaria, although they all carry the germs of the disease. In opposition to their resistance to malaria, the Onge are vulnerable to minor lung infections and measles, which we would not consider serious.

When fever occurs, whatever the cause, the Onge recur to their universal remedy : plastering the entire body with clay, ochre, turtle fat and honey. Legs, arms and trunk are swaddled in tight bandages made of strips of ficus bark. These bandages hinder superficial blood circulation. The strips are removed from time to time and replaced after vigorous massaging of the body with hands and feet. Stomach and chest pains, as well as insistent coughing, are treated by stretching the patient horizontally on the ground and rubbing him energetically with hands and feet. The feet compress the body, with special attention to the affected part. The entire trunk is worked over in this manner, inch by inch, and the patient is carefully rotated until he has been completely turned around to receive treatment on all sides. This process lasts half an hour or more. It is a curious sight to see a man transformed into a kind of sausage, all tied up in strings and subjected to violent treatment on the bare ground, with a crowd of spectators surrounding him, obviously taking the whole performance quite seriously. The result is kill or cure ; the former helped, I should say, by rough treatment performed with the best intentions.

Exposure to hot smoke is another Onge cure for wounds and pains. I saw it applied, for instance, on Nabimbōi, the fat young wife of Maritōi, chief of Chemalē. She had scorched her right foot by stepping inadvertently on smouldering ashes. The pain made it impossible for her to sleep, so she was treated by covering the burn with the usual mixture of clay, turtle fat and honey, and exposing it to hot smoke. The smoke was provided by burning the fresh seeds of a creeper, each as big as a horse-chestnut and of the same colour, but of a lenticular shape. Incisions are made in the seeds to prevent explosion, and they are laid on the fire where they give out a thick smoke. The injured foot was held as close to the fire as possible. Recovery promptly ensued, but I would not swear that it was due to the treatment.

Fire is used by the Onge also against fever, whatever its cause. I shall quote an instance. On the night of 28 March, 1954, one of my guides, Toncootēi, a very intelligent Onge, suffered a strong attack of fever while resting in the Antiguēh communal hut in the interior of the island. I diagnosed the trouble as indigestion from immoderate guzzling of pork meat. Friends stretched Toncootēi on the ground, resting on his right side. Two lines of burning charcoal, set at right angles, outlined his back and head. Then one of the Onge started spitting on Toncootēi's hair. This was followed by vigorous rubbing of his scalp, with occasional pauses to seize his head and press it strongly with both hands. Following this, diluted ochre and clay – very hot – was spread on his thorax, throat and neck and rubbed in vigorously, whereupon the patient was brought closer to the fire. In the meantime a young fellow

6: Cipriani E-5 (1951-1953)1961 AZ2 Andamans AZ2
Onge

757 started slapping his hands on Toncootĕi's and exposing them intermittently to
372 the fire. All this lasted over a quarter of an hour. The patient was then made
123 to lie prone, with his legs spread out, to receive a foot massage as described above, for another quarter of an hour. Torso, feet and hands were worked over, with short pauses for artificial respiration by means of compression. Subsequently his back, and particularly the sacral region, was vigorously rubbed by willing hands and feet. Three men performed this operation. Toncootĕi was finally allowed to rest, between two fires kept burning all night. Sunrise found him alive, and the fever had abated, due, I think, to a good European laxative that I had persuaded him to take.

164 In March 1952, I witnessed a sad episode, followed by the death of
123 the patient, near my Labanare camp. A young mother was suffering from breast rhagades. Her baby was less than a month old, and she was also suckling
[862] another child, almost two years old, who had sharp teeth. It is a frequent
[597] kindly habit of the Onge to adopt babies; and it is customary to breast-feed them up to the age of four. Some interesting consequences arise out of this habit, but I shall not analyze them here. A minor detail: since they are allowed to suckle when they wish and are weaned so late, Onge children do not indulge in thumb sucking. Considerable reactions are spontaneously established between the two terminal parts of the digestive tube - oral and anal, as though
[864] in physiological conflict. Once more I affirm that the evidence of Onge sexual behaviour positively denies Freudian theories with regard to the sexual life of children. Furthermore, young anthropoids and primitive people behave identically in this respect.

164 The adopted baby gave the young mother nipple wounds that became
123 infected and suppurated. For lack of proper care and in unhygienic surroundings, the infection spread to the rest of her body. I found her suffering terribly
752 from pain in the breast, muscular spasm and high fever. The Onge had applied their usual external remedies to her body, from head to foot. Very tight bandages of ficus bark, renewed three times a day, were wrapped arounds legs, arms, trunk and abdomen. Bright red ochre - rare in Little Andaman and considered more effective because of its brilliant colour - was painted onto the afflicted breast. The poor young woman looked at me hopefully. I suggested her immediate removal to Port Blair Hospital, and sent radio messages from my camp to the Chief Commissioner, Mr. A. K. Ghosh. He responded generously by ordering a ship to call for the patient, but the journey was useless because her relations were opposed to displacing her. In March 1952 my friendship with the Onge was only starting; this will explain their refusal to follow my advice. Without proper care, in a place like Little Andaman, the patient died four days after my arrival at the camp.

756 Prescription of medicines and treatments such as those described above
[759] is not determined by specialists. Everybody submits to treatment, with general approval, convinced of its effectiveness. Witch doctors do not exist and perhaps never existed in the Andamans. Nothing, then, is known by the
755 Onge of the dances and exhibitions, commonly executed elsewhere for curative
757 purposes, that influence the patient on a psychobiological basis. As they have

6: Cipriani E-5 (1951-1953)1961 AZ2 Andamans AZ2
Onge

no specialized physicians, the Onge do not understand that payment can be exacted for medical care. This stems from the fact that wages are not considered by those happy people as payment for any kind of work whatsoever, but only as a gift. I realized this when I tried to pay my guides after our extenuating marches through the jungle : in order to avoid offending the natives that we had casually met in the course of our trip, I had to give equal reward to everybody.

The Onge consider some men or women better endowed than others with anti-malefic influence ; but these too neither demand nor receive wages for their services. Evil spirits or evil persons are believed to be principally responsible for illness. A series of superstitions and remarkable habits derive from this belief. The above-mentioned precautions concerning the *naquinēghē* are among them. For identical reasons they carefully hide hair cuttings, but not nail parings, for the simple reason that nails are never cut but worn down by digging for edible roots, fishing, and other rough work. Superstition, as we know, is also the reason for painting the body to prevent fever and other ills.

In the depths of their jungle the Onge appear to practice some kind of witchcraft. On several occasions I noticed the mysterious behaviour of some natives travelling with me. Occasionally a man left our marching column to examine the inside of a huge hollow tree and signal to his friends. They did not prevent me from looking into the hollow, where I saw only a simple structure of short sticks resembling a trap without being one. The Onge do not use traps ; moreover, those structures were far too flimsy to catch anything. Often, two or three men assembled in consultation, rearranged the sticks that had probably been dislodged by the passage of lizards, crabs or other small animals, and walked away silently. I could get no explanation on the matter. Certainly the Onge are sagacious observers of animal and vegetable life and have deep knowledge of their hidden properties. Some trees are probably used for magical purposes, but, I insist, it is impossible as yet to affirm it. The structures in question consisted of four vertical sticks, about 30 cms long, joined at the top by four more sticks of approximately the same length, placed horizontally. The result was a box-like frame, loose and unsecured. The slightest disturbance, such as a light breeze, could destroy the flimsy construction. As far as I could guess they invested those structures with curative properties, but in what manner remains a mystery. I noticed analogous practices among Central African Pygmies and other primitives.

It is very clear that the Onge dread illness and magic spells, for they consider themselves at a loss in fighting such evils. Unhygienic habits are of no importance to them.

Resting is considered favorable to good health. The Onge indulge voluptuously in rest, interrupting it, however, with too frequent sexual excursions. They mainly rest from doing nothing, because 90 % of their time is spent in what, for them, is the most agreeable manner of enjoying life.

In mid-March, when the honey harvest reaches its peak, the Onge guzzle

10: Sen K-3, 4 (ca. 1955) 1962 AZ2 Andamans AZ2
ONGE

the felling of the tree, chiselling the lumber and processing it further to give the shape of a canoe. Buckets of wood are also constructed by them from the softwood tree. Two types of baskets are made, the smaller ones are more well-finished than the bigger ones. The former is known as *tolevaga* and the later *tole-laya*. Such activities have introduced the use of dahs, chisels, and iron files among the Onges, from the iron pieces derived from the sea shores. The other important pieces of their craftsmanship are the beautiful weavings of fibre, tussel of yellow fibre used by the women in their front. However, the art of making the earthen pots has been completely forgotten.

The leisure in their lives has helped the development of some amount of aesthetic senses among the Onges. All the Onges men and women shave their heads with flakes of glass, obtained from the sea-borne glass bottles. The body of the Onges are also painted with white clay which save their skin from insect-bite while red paint serves medicinal purposes if some individual is having fever. In times of mourning, red orchre paint is a taboo.[1]

Early marriage is the custom. The widows are looked down upon by the society. Some incidents of widow murder and drowning are heard. In the married life, the husband is devoted to his wife and both the husband and wife work for collecting their food.

Dances and songs are in vogue and there are practically songs for every occasion and activity. Most of their songs are more plaintive than joyous.

There are three broad divisions of the Onges of the Little Andaman :

(1) *Giremeka-Gobeule* group inhabiting the northeastern coast of the island ;

(2) *Engakwale group* live in the interior of the islands ; and

(3) *Gireraragobeule group* live in the southern and western coasts of the islands.

In spite of all the limitations, the Onges have been considered as one of the happiest people of the world with plenty of food and water to eat and drink and with very few social cankers to fight with. But as is common to all other aborigines of the Andamans, a decline in their number is discernible.

The Sentinelese

The Sentinelese are the least known of all the aborigines of the Anda-

1 The Onge of the Little Andaman—A short guide book ; Anthropological Gallery, Indian Museum, Calcutta.

To truly primitive peoples like the Onges, European medical practices are fascinating. Men and women will refuse literally nothing once they are convinced of our intention to do them good and cure their ills. Although they have a rudimentary form of medicine, they recognize the superiority of European methods, and medical aid has therefore become our most powerful means of making contact with uncivilized peoples.

While I was busy trying to alleviate their ailments I became aware of the power which 'medicine' has over them, and I was also able to observe their own methods of dealing with their ills. Understandably, disease, death and birth are all attributed to particular supernatural beings, or to the spirits of the dead. They try not to offend these beings, but strive nevertheless, in their own way, at least to cure disease. Once primitive peoples see our methods they respect them, and are eager to be treated; strange though it all seems, they develop a blind faith in the omnipotence of the new ways.

There is little actual disease among the Onges and they have equally few vices. They are still unaware of the existence of alcohol, and have not learned how to ferment sugar substances, such as the honey in which the Little Andaman abounds. Tobacco is a recent introduction, and the Onges at once became wildly addicted to it; the tobacco leaves I had taken with me were in fact my best means of making my way peacefully into the island. A few Onges have acquired a supply of opium from Burmese and Chinese smugglers along the north coast, but instead of smoking it they seem to limit themselves to chewing it mixed with tobacco, and have fortunately no means of replenishing their stock.

Polio, tuberculosis, smallpox and cancer seem unknown, but for some unknown reason the islands have on a number of occasions been struck by disastrous epidemics of measles. These epidemics struck nearly every member of some of the communal huts, judging from survivors' reports, and the sites were afterwards abandoned, leaving the huts to be destroyed by termites.

The census of 1931 includes a personal observation by Portman of congenital syphilis in several Onges. This has since been proved wrong and in 1952 I found only one young man with nasal malformation possibly attributable to the disease, half-moon incisors, and abnormality of the skull and palate. I was not able to find him

11: Cipriani E-3 (1951-1955) 1966 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

attempts to help, after binding his throat, had consisted in smearing the man's entire body with a mixture of ochre, turtle fat and honey with an extra layer on the bitten limb. Although it was very late to start treatment I injected antiserum, and the next day the man seemed a little better. I next saw him eleven days after the injection, when the arm appeared much less swollen, and the pain had almost disappeared, although clear traces of the accident remained; the skin was cracked and peeling, and the two puncture marks at the site of the bite were still gaping open, each revealing red, purulent flesh over a circular area more than two centimetres in diameter. The arm looked almost gangrenous, but its owner did not seem worried, and joined in cheerfully with the others round me. Just over a month after the accident the wound was completely healed, leaving one very grateful patient.

The incident shows the complete solidarity of this simple and reputedly so warlike community; by tacit agreement the patient was relieved of all work, and provided with food by the other families in the communal hut. While he was seriously ill his wife went hunting and fished, normally the man's work. Similar help is given in the case of the aged, or if a wife and mother falls ill; food is provided for them, and for the children, and certain 'soothsayers' appear to be at least partially provided with food by the rest of the community on a permanent basis.

For any kind of fever the Onges turn immediately to their stock remedy, smearing the entire body with the usual mixture of ochre, turtle fat and honey. The legs, arms, chest and abdomen are then tightly bound with strips of *Ficus* bark, which are removed and renewed from time to time. Whether the patient has pains in the abdomen or in the chest, or elsewhere, or has a cough, he is invariably stretched out on the ground, and the appropriate part is given a form of vigorous massage by the feet of one of the bystanders. Usually the entire body is pummelled for quite a time, the patient being turned over and over. The patient ends up looking rather like a mummy plastered in ochre and the whole process is to us somewhat amusing, but the Onges all practise it, and submit to it, very seriously, believing implicitly in its efficiency. The mechanism by which the treatment works has yet to be determined!

Balls of ochre the size of a hazelnut and varying in colour from bright red to whitish-yellow are given by mouth, particularly to

11: Cipriani E-3 (1951-1955) 1966 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

757 [237] children. I have seen anything up to half a dozen given, one after another. Their laxative effect is sometimes violent, as the ochre is mixed with the usual turtle fat, plus lumps of pure wax from the hives of the black bees.

752 Another 'cure' is the smoking of the affected part. One young woman well known to me, Nabinibbi (wife of Maritòi, leader of the Cemalè group), plump and in her own way graceful, had burnt two toes of her right foot, and was unable to sleep with the pain. She smeared the foot well beyond the burn with the usual mixture and held it out to the smoke of great fresh liana seeds laid among embers. The seeds, the size of a large chestnut, but lenticular and covered with a dark brown, leathery skin, burnt with a dense smoke.

757 Another treatment, rather different, was applied to one of my Onge guides, Toncutèi, who developed a high fever on the night of 28 March 1954, while he was in the communal hut known as Entiguèh, in the north-central area of the island. In fact, it was merely violent indigestion caused by too much pork – Toncutèi, like his father Enagaghe, an indefatigable trencherman, had availed himself too freely of the boars shot that day by my men. His friends laid him on his side on the ground on a rectangular mat barely large enough to take his body, with his legs bent up to his chest. They then lit low fires along two adjoining sides of the mat, turning him from time to time so that he 'cooked' evenly. One Onge began spitting on the patient's hair, and rubbing the spittle into the skin, stopping every now and again to press the victim's head between his hands. Another dissolved ochre in water, and after heating it, rubbed it well into the patient's chest, throat and neck. Meanwhile, a third beat his hands vigorously on Toncutèi's. This went on for just over a quarter of an hour, after which the patient was stretched out on his stomach with his feet sticking out over the end of the mat, ready for the foot massage. As the masseur's foot reached the chest he stopped, pressing hard to enforce complete emptying of the lungs. Half an hour of this led to further rubbing with hands and feet for another fifteen minutes, particularly over the sacrum. [123] Finally Toncutèi was left in peace beside the fire. By dawn the fever was gone (aided possibly by the strong purgative I had administered), although it was a couple of days before he had fully recovered.

11: Cipriani E-3 (1951-1955) 1966 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

Near my camp at Labanar, in March 1952, I witnessed a distressing and fatal case. A young woman, with a baby a month old, had suckled another child, as the Onge women do. The older infant, which had cut its teeth, caused damage to the nipples and the ensuing infection spread throughout the body. The wretched woman was writhing with fever and the pain from her infected breasts and suppressed lactation. Her body had been smeared with a vermilion ochre, held to be the most powerful balm, and tightly bound, as usual. Her condition was so poor that I suggested sending her at once to Port Blair for treatment. Unfortunately, however, at that time I was only just beginning to establish contact with the Onges, and the woman's husband, after all the arrangements had been made, refused to let her go. I had not yet gained the Onges' confidence enough to be allowed near the woman, and although I was able to photograph her I could do nothing to prevent her death.

The decision to administer 'medicine' and subject patients to various treatments is not the province of any specialists, but is taken by anyone in the group; all, including the patient, accept the decision, since all are utterly convinced that it will benefit them. Medicine men and sorcerers, so numerous in Africa and elsewhere, do not exist among the Andamanese.

The Onges have not the slightest idea of any standards of hygiene. They never wash intentionally; the forest, dripping from every leaf, and frequent immersion in water while out hunting, take care of the problem. One must admit that in the circumstances their nakedness is hygienic. A small fire is kept burning beside each bed at night for warmth, a useful precaution which I found very welcome on the many cold nights which followed a very hot day. Deprived of these fires the Onges fall ill at once, a fact of which I had ample proof on several occasions when I took Onges with me out of Little Andaman; they were provided with beds and coverings in well-constructed wooden houses, but although none of them complained about the absence of the fires by their beds they all developed feverish chills.

And yet in their own territory I have seen them lie soaking wet all night in one of their temporary forest camps or a communal hut with a leaking roof without any ill effects, simply because they had

142
302
516
531

142
301
302
516
957

3 *Above top* A group of Onges resting against the bastion roots of a tree. The man in the centre is smoking a crab-claw pipe
4 *Above* A typical example of tight binding of the body as a cure for disease
2 *Left* Two examples of the geometric patterns which are painted on the face and torso

[facing P. 66, C]